

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A method of microbially deactivating items and storing the same in a sealable container forming a microbial barrier ~~around~~ completely enclosing said items, comprising the steps of:

a) placing items within a cavity in a sealable container having fluid access ports therein, said fluid access ports having a normally closed position and being moveable to an open position;

b) placing said container having items to be microbially deactivated in said cavity into a reprocessor having a circulation system for circulating a microbial deactivation fluid during a deactivation cycle;

c) causing said fluid access ports in said container to engage actuating means on said reprocessor wherein engagement of said fluid access ports with said actuating means moves said fluid access ports to said open position to be in fluid communication with said circulation system;

d) circulating said microbial deactivation fluid through said cavity of said container; and

e) removing said container from said reprocessor following a deactivation cycle;

f) disengaging said fluid access ports from said actuating means on said reprocessor during said step e) of removing thereby causing said fluid access ports to assume said normally closed position sealing said container, said sealed container forming a microbial barrier ~~around~~ completely enclosing said items;

g) storing said sealed container with said items therein at a location remote from said reprocessor for a period of time while simultaneously maintaining said microbial barrier completely enclosing said items therein.

Claim 2 (canceled)

3. (previously presented) A method as defined in claim 1, further comprising the step of:

h) placing said container in a heated chamber to dry off moisture in said container while maintaining said items in a deactivated state.

4. (currently amended) A method of microbially deactivating items and storing the same in a sealable container forming a microbial barrier around said items, comprising the steps of:

a) placing items to be deactivated into a cavity in a sealable container having a controllable fluid access port, said fluid access port being moveable between a normally closed position and an open position;

b) placing said container having items to be deactivated therein into a reprocessor having a circulation system for circulating a microbial deactivation fluid through said cavity;

c) causing said fluid access port to move to said open position from said normally closed position by contacting actuating means on said reprocessor as said container is placed into said reprocessor;

d) circulating said microbial deactivation fluid through said cavity;

e) removing said container following a deactivation cycle;

f) causing said fluid access port to move to said normally closed position when said fluid access port no longer contacts said actuating means sealing said container, said sealed container forming a microbial barrier ~~around~~ completely enclosing said items; and

g) storing said sealed container with said deactivated items therein while simultaneously maintaining said microbial barrier completely enclosing said items therein.

5. (original) A method as defined in claim 4, wherein said microbial deactivation fluid is a liquid solution.

6. (previously presented) A method as defined in claim 5, further comprising the step of:

h) heating items within said container to evaporate moisture from said items while maintaining said items in a deactivated state.